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Nixon Views His 'Six C'

Richard M. Nixon, former Vice President of the United States, Republican candidate for President in 1960, currently candidate for Governor of California, has been one of the most controversial political figures of the past decades. In his progress to the House of Representatives, to the Senate, to the Presidency and almost to the White House, he created strong enthusiasm and deep hostility and even hatred among a very large group of Americans and other large group. Few Americans are neutral or undecided.

Now Mr. Nixon has written his first book, "Six Crises," and it provides fascinating insight into why both sets of views are widely held.

To furnish a frame on which to organize certain of his experiences, Mr. Nixon adopted the device of examining how he reacted to six crucial episodes in his career: His successful efforts to identify Alger Hiss as a Communist agent, the which first brought Mr. Nixon national fame; the furor during the 1952 campaign when stories were published that some California friends had been providing him a "fund" to cover political expense; the problems he and his associates in the California and White House faced carrying on the campaign during the critical illnesses of President Eisenhower; Communist attacks on him during his 1958 trip to South America; encounters with Soviet Premier Khrushchev in Moscow in July 1959; and the 1960 Presidential campaign.

Mr. Nixon's Self-Analysis

In each episode, Mr. Nixon periodically interrupts the flow of the narrative—to analyze his own reactions at the moments of crisis, the lessons he learned from these reactions. Among these lessons: The ability to be calm in a crisis depends on the degree of preparation; the most difficult period is the crisis period of decision-making, and the decision itself is easy; the most dangerous period comes after the crisis, when energy is spent and reactions dulled.

These psychoanalytic asides are not nearly as interesting as the story Mr. Nixon relates. Much of the early material has already been told in biographies and articles. But the first-person retelling of Mr. Nixon himself, with an excellent eye for vivid detail and colorful quotes, has impact. Some of the previous accounts carried rather flatly, for example, related that Nixon exploded when he heard, after a famous TV broadcast during the 1952 election, that Ike still wanted a face-to-face meeting before making a final decision whether to drop the Californian from the race.

How much more vivid the account of Mr. Nixon himself: "For the first time since a week of tremendous tension, I really blew my stack. 'What more can he expect from me?' I asked."

Much of the material on later events is new and fascinating—his private talks with Mr. Khrushchev, his campaign strategy, his post-election meeting with Mr. Kennedy in Miami Beach. Already there is controversy over his attack on Mr. Kennedy's campaign remarks on Cuba. Mr. Nixon charges his opponent jeopardized national security by basing his Cuba program on secret information given the candidate in Central Intelligence Agency briefings; President Kennedy and former C.I.A. chief Dulles have denied this, and apparently a misunderstanding was involved.

View of Kennedy, Johnson

Mr. Kennedy emerges from Mr. Nixon's pages as an intelligent and resourceful opponent, but an unprincipled and opportunistic one. Vice President Lyndon Johnson, Mr. Nixon says, "has always been a political pragmatist and has never had too much difficulty accommodating his principles to his politics." New York Governor Rockefeller, the author indicates, is another man who lets his ambitions dominate his principles.

Probably the book is of greatest interest, though, in what it suggests of Mr. Nixon himself. And it is here that fan and critic each will find evidence to bolster his own case.

Mr. Nixon pushed the Hiss case hard, when other people were inclined to let it slide, and was proven right. His behavior during President Eisenhower's illness was eminently correct in a most difficult situation. He was available for political assignments even when the auspices were bad. His actions on the South American trip were courageous, his arguments with Mr. Khrushchev in Moscow handled diplomatically but firmly. During the 1960 campaign, he rejected urgings to exploit the Catholic issue, even when the Democrats were exploiting it in their fashion.

On the other hand, his book shows how much of a lone wolf he has been, how little he sought or heeded the advice of staff and friends. His distrust of the press, lack of humor, frequent use of corny clichés all are underlined.

His accounts repeatedly shade the facts in his own favor—perhaps not surprising for a politician. For example, he says his role in the Hiss case has been the source of "liberal" antipathy; actually, most "liberals" based their dislike of Mr. Nixon on a belief he used extreme tactics in his campaign for the House in 1946 and for the Senate in 1950.

He blames his poor showing in the first television debate with Mr. Kennedy almost entirely on his own run-down physical appearance, and never mentions that much of the criticism was because he spent so much of the time "me-tooing" his opponent. He says he rejects "the theory, expressed by some," that he would have received better treatment from campaign reporters had he

courted them more. Or had his press secretary, Herb Klein, "provided the more elaborate facilities for entertainment that Salinger, with greater funds at his disposal, was able to provide." The common complaint was not that Mr. Nixon did not court reporters; he just wasn't as available to answer questions and clear up confusions as Mr. Kennedy was—quite a different matter from "courting." And if Kennedy's press secretary Pierre Salinger provided elaborate entertainment facilities, they were a closely held secret.

Mr. Nixon, at the age of 49, is approaching a seventh and possibly decisive crisis. If he loses in California this November, his political career is over and he will probably fade into relative obscurity. If he wins, he'll be on the comeback trail, breeding new controversies and clashes. And future political leaders and political observers will be citing again and again from this book.

—ALAN L. OTTEN

"Six Crises." By Richard M. Nixon. Doubleday. 400 pages. \$5.95.